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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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There haven't been any additional tragedies this week, but it has been another week of trials and tribulations. Everyone here is still faced with tasks dealing with getting my in-laws relocated in an orderly fashion while taking care of the affairs leading up to this predicament.

So, it's been another long and tiring week taking care of these affairs while trying to manage out day-to-day affairs - not always with much success. So, let me close out yet another week, and another issue; let's get right to it, shall we!

Until next time...

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Schilling's Company Asks RI for More Help!
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Minecraft Mines a Million on Xbox Live!
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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Minecraft Mines a Million on Xbox Live

It looks like Minecraft is just as popular on Xbox Live as it is on the PC.

That sure didn't take long. It's not exactly unexpected, but Microsoft announced today that just five days after its release, Minecraft: Xbox 360 Edition has sold more than one million units on Xbox Live Arcade.

Xbox 360 owners have already sunk more than 5.2 million total online hours in the game, including 2.4 million hours spread across four million multiplayer sessions. At 1600 Microsoft points per copy, that translates into roughly $20 million in sales, not bad at all for five days.

Minecraft was the final game released as part of the four-week-long "Arcade Next" promotion, which also included Trials Evolution, Bloodforge and Fable Heroes. Microsoft had previously revealed that the 360 edition of Minecraft also had the highest single-day sales total of any XBLA game, beating out Trials Evolution.

"Uhhhh, Microsoft just sent out a press release saying Minecraft: Xbox 360 Edition has sold a million copies in five days," Minecraft creator Markus "Notch" Persson wrote on Twitter. "Wow." He also noted that despite the wild success of the game across multiple platforms, he is still "not quite Iron Man rich," but is presumably working on it.

Analyst Fears Video Game Industry May Hit Six-Year Low

NPD Group last week announced that video games sales for the month of April were down 26% and software sales plummeted from $630.4 million to $307.2 million, representing a 42% decline from April 2011. The numbers shocked industry analysts, who predicted a maximum software decline of 27%. The only segment of the gaming industry that did not suffer was the accessories segment, which grew a mere 0.5% from $147.8 million last year to $148.6 million this year. According Gamasutra analyst Matt Matthews, should the contraction from 2011 continue at this pace, annual U.S. retail video game revenue in 2012 could fall below the $12.6 billion figure from 2006, representing a six-year low since the first full year of Xbox 360 sales and the launch year for both the Nintendo Wii and Sony PlayStation 3.

Schilling’s Video Game Company Asks RI for More Help

Former Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling asked Rhode Island for additional help to save his video game company Wednesday, prompting state leaders to consider whether the firm is viable enough to justify further investment.

Schilling briefed Gov. Lincoln Chafee and the state’s Economic Development Corp. board in a closed-door session.

Following the meeting, Chafee would not say what Schilling is seeking from the state. The governor said the question before state economic development officials was, "How do we avoid throwing good money after bad?"

Schilling declined to answer questions, saying only: "My priority right now is to get back to my team."

Concerns about 38 Studios’ financial health arose when it failed to make a scheduled $1.1 million payment to the Economic Development Corp. on May 1.

The business was lured from Massachusetts in 2010 after Rhode Island

offered a $75 million loan guarantee that state officials said would help bring hundreds of jobs and millions in tax revenue.

No action was taken on 38 Studios' new request. The board's next scheduled meeting is Monday.

"We have a lot of work to do between now and then," Chafee said.

Chafee has vowed to do "everything possible" to assist the company, named after Schilling's number as a player, and keep the state from having to pay the company's debts.

The governor, an independent who serves as chairman of the Economic Development Corp. board, called the situation "very, very complicated."

"The difficulty that we face is protecting the taxpayers and looking ahead to the future (to determine) whether there's viability that's worth further investment," he said Wednesday.

House Speaker Gordon Fox said Tuesday he began hearing "inklings" about trouble at the company a few weeks ago, but didn't have complete information to gauge the company's health.

Under the terms of the loan guarantee agreement, 38 Studios promised to bring to Rhode Island a total of 450 jobs over three years. An outside monitor was to follow the company's progress.

The company released its much-anticipated first game, "Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning," to strong reviews in February.

Chafee and others criticized the loan guarantee at the time it was offered, saying it was putting taxpayer money at risk to help a company with no track record of success. During his run for governor, Chafee called it "one of the biggest risks I've ever seen."

Economic Development Corp. Executive Director Keith Stokes said at the time the board determined the loan agreement was a calculated risk well worth taking. Stokes said the board performed months of due diligence in analyzing the video game sector and 38 Studios and crafted a loan guarantee agreement that included strict performance benchmarks.

He said the agreement went "to great lengths to safeguard taxpayers and ensure economic performance."

A document outlining the agreement between the economic development agency and the company says 38 Studios was working in Massachusetts on developing a massively multiplayer online game dubbed "Copernicus."

The initial target market size for the game was estimated to be $3.2 billion in net revenue in North America and $1.6 billion in western Europe, the document said.

Still, the document acknowledges that the video game business is "highly speculative and inherently risky." It says the market for massively multiplayer online games is dominated by "World of Warcraft," but that some of its competitors have been "commercially successful" despite being unable to match the game's subscription figures.

Four months before economic development officials held a bond sale to raise money for 38 Studios, the company took out a revolving line of

credit of $2.5 million to support its operations, the document said.

The credit line was to be capped at $4 million and was secured by Schilling, the memo said. The company anticipated that all or a portion of the bond proceeds would be used to pay down the outstanding amounts on the credit line.

Two months later, the company took out a 120-day credit line worth $3 million that was expected to be paid down with the bond proceeds, the document said.

Under legislation passed in 2010, the General Assembly created a program giving the economic development agency the authority to back up to $125 million in loans to businesses promising to create permanent, full-time jobs.

The loans would come from lending institutions, not the state, but Rhode Island would agree to repay the lender if a company defaulted.

The corporation issued bonds in 2010 and set aside the proceeds of the bond sale for 38 Studios to tap when the company met financial and other milestones, including relocating to Providence, creating jobs and finding a distributor for "Copernicus."

The Economic Development Corp. said the company has received nearly $50 million so far and created at least 250 full-time jobs with an average annual salary of at least $67,500.

The company is not scheduled to begin making payments on the interest on the bonds until November. It is not supposed to begin paying back the principal until November 2013.

While 38 Studios failed to make this year’s $1.125 million payment to the Economic Development Corp. essentially a service fee it made last year’s payment of nearly $555,000, the agency said.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Interpol To Crack Down on Cyber Crime

Interpol said Tuesday it is making the war against cyber crime a main priority this year as online fraud crosses borders and increases in scope.

Khoo Boon Hui, president of the global police network, told a conference of 49 European member states that cyber crime is becoming more transnational. He pointed to a study published in March by the London Metropolitan University that found 80 percent of online crime is connected to cross-border organized gangs.

"Organized crime is now able to recruit members from countries without diplomatic ties to commit crimes overseas operating from temporary safe bases in third countries equipped with the latest technology," he said.

Hui said Malaysian police last month arrested more than 200 cyber criminals from China and Taiwan who operated online scams through two syndicates under the instructions of a common Taiwanese boss.

By using temporary safe bases around the far East, the online scammers netted billions of dollars via football and gambling websites along with credit card and bank fraud schemes, he said. He said hackers even penetrated the Interpol website this year.

Hui said cyber crime costs Europe about 750 billion euros, or more than $977 billion, a year. Israel alone deals with more than 1,000 Web attacks a minute, he said.

To help train police worldwide in online law enforcement, Hui said Interpol will open a cyber crime and digital security complex in Singapore in 2014.

This week’s conference also addressed other issues including international terrorism, the drug trade, and human trafficking.

Yahoo Soap Opera Features New Cast of Leaders

Yahoo’s dysfunctional turnaround efforts have morphed into a Silicon Valley soap opera, one that has taken another strange twist with the Internet company’s ousting of CEO Scott Thompson just four months after his arrival.

Thompson’s hasty departure, amid a furor over an inaccurate resume, ushers in a new cast of characters led by interim CEO Ross Levinsohn and New York hedge fund manager Daniel Loeb. It was Loeb’s sleuthing skill that uncovered Thompson’s misleading biography. With a 5.8 percent stake in the company, Loeb now gets even more leverage with three seats on Yahoo’s 11-member board of directors. He and the rest of Yahoo’s board will appoint one more "mutually agreeable" director, according to a Monday regulatory filing.

If Yahoo’s saga is to end happily, the company’s new leadership will have to develop a strategy to lure back Web surfers and advertisers who have been defecting to Internet rivals Google Inc. and Facebook Inc. At the same time, they will likely need to complete the complicated negotiations to sell part of the company’s prized stake in China Alibaba Group.

Those objectives ranked high on Thompson’s priority list, too, but a ficitious college degree that appeared on his official biography ended his brief tenure.

Another factor may have contributed to Thompson’s short stay. Citing unnamed sources familiar with the matter, The Wall Street Journal reported that Thompson, 54, had informed Yahoo’s board last week that he has been diagnosed with thyroid cancer. Even so, Thompson was still scrambling to save his job last week as he deflected responsibility for a bio that included a college degree in computer science that he never

received. Thompson, in fact, graduated from Stonehill College, near Boston, in 1979 with a degree in accounting not computer science.

Incensed at initially being denied a seat on Yahoo’s board, Loeb exposed the phantom degree earlier this month.

In a sign that he was forced out, Thompson left Yahoo without a severance package, according to documents filed Monday with the Securities and Exchange Commission. He is also surrendering unvested stock awards valued at $16 million. Thompson will get to keep a $1.5 million cash bonus and restricted stock valued at $5.5 million that Yahoo paid him to compensate for benefits he gave up at his former job at PayPal, an online payment service owned by eBay Inc. Yahoo had been paying Thompson a $1 million annual salary, which could have been supplemented by a bonus of up to $2 million.

Analysts are divided on whether Yahoo is now in a better position to lift its long-slumping stock price and revive its revenue growth.

Macquarie Securities analyst Ben Schachter thought Yahoo was making its greatest progress in years under Thompson’s aggressive leadership. Now, there’s a risk that Thompson’s exit will waste four months of turnaround work a setback that Schachter says Yahoo Inc. can’t afford at this critical juncture.

"What is really scary about all this is the Internet is the fastest moving industry in the world, so the time they are losing is very dangerous," Macquarie said.

Other analysts believe Levinsohn is a better fit as Yahoo’s CEO than Thompson, who had spent the previous seven years immersed in processing digital payments at PayPal.

"Levinsohn is an extremely qualified executive, in our view, and will serve as a calming force amid the turmoil," Stifel Nicolaus analyst Jordan Rohan wrote in a Monday email. "He has a visceral understanding of what it takes to succeed in the media business. We believe that under new leadership, Yahoo is more likely to re-emerge as a premier, highly profitable online media."

It’s a sentiment shared by some investors. Yahoo’s stock added 31 cents, or 2 percent, to close Monday at $15.50.

Levinsohn’s name had been bandied about as a CEO candidate before the company hired Silicon Valley veteran Carol Bartz to fill that role in January 2009. Bartz subsequently hired Levinsohn as one of her top lieutenants in late 2010 and then his name came up as a potential successor to Bartz after Yahoo fired her eight months ago. Yahoo instead appointed its chief financial officer, Tim Morse, as interim CEO before settling on Thompson.

Levinsohn, 48, is best known for running the Internet operations of Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp. when that company bought MySpace, then the Internet’s top social network, for $580 million in 2005. Levinsohn then negotiated a lucrative advertising deal that made the MySpace deal look like a coup. But then Facebook emerged as the Internet’s social hub, and News Corp. wound up unloading MySpace for just $35 million last year, long after Levinsohn had left.

In previous jobs, Levinsohn also held top media positions at CBS

Sportsline and Alta Vista, a once-popular search engine that was supplanted by Google.

As the head of Yahoo’s media and advertising services, Levinsohn had been striking more exclusive online video deals featuring well-known talents such as former CBS news anchor Katie Couric and actors Tom Hanks and Jeff Goldblum. Yahoo has also been gearing up to increase its coverage of the Summer Olympics and U.S. presidential election in the fall.

Levinsohn has publicly described Yahoo’s audience of more than 700 million users as an "untapped jewel" that should be able to attract more advertising than it has in recent years.

Yahoo’s annual revenue has fallen from a peak of $7.2 billion in 2008 to $5 billion last year. Advertisers aren’t spending as much money at Yahoo largely because they have been getting better returns at Internet search leader Google and at Facebook, where people have are spending more of their online time. In March, for instance, Web surfers in the U.S. spent an average of six-and-half hours on Facebook compared to four-and-three-quarters hours on Google services and three-and-half hours on Yahoo.

Despite the downturn in revenue, Yahoo has become more profitable by cutting costs under both Bartz and Thompson. After laying off 2,000 workers last month, Thompson had started to identify about 50 Yahoo services that he intended to close or sell. Levinsohn, who was working closely with Thompson, hasn’t indicated if he still intends get rid of all those services.

Although Levinsohn has been labeled as interim CEO, Yahoo’s board is probably hoping he performs well enough to be appointed the company’s permanent leader, said Gayle Mattson, an executive vice president for executive search firm DHR International.

"I am sure the board is auditioning him because to try to bring someone from outside the company right would be a total disaster," Mattson said.

Levinsohn isn’t getting a raise with his expanded responsibilities, Yahoo said Monday. His salary as a Yahoo executive vice president in charge of media content and advertising remains at $700,000 salary with an annual bonus of up to $840,000. Yahoo gave Morse, a 25 percent raise that lifted his salary to $750,000 when he was named Yahoo’s interim CEO after Bartz’s ouster.

Loeb, who runs the Third Point LLC hedge fund, has muscled his way on to a Yahoo board that has undergone a radical makeover. All but three of the directors have been appointed since February. One of the recent appointees, former technology executive Alfred Amoroso, is the new chairman of the board, but Loeb "is clearly calling the shots right now," Schachter said.

Loeb has gained investors’ respect with scathing public criticism that eventually pressured Yahoo to get rid of the remaining directors that sat on the board when the company committed perhaps its biggest blunder a squandered opportunity to sell itself to Microsoft Corp. for $33 per share, or $47.5 billion, per share, four years ago. Yahoo’s stock price hasn’t traded above $20 since September 2008.

The breakdown in Microsoft negotiations triggered a shareholder mutiny that culminated in billionaire investor Carl Icahn and two of his allies

being appointed to Yahoo’s board in 2008. Icahn resigned after just 15 months on the board.

Loeb is expected to play a more influential role in the boardroom than Icahn did, particularly in Yahoo’s on-again, off-again negotiations to sell part of its roughly 40 percent stake in Alibaba, one of the hottest companies in China’s rapidly growing Internet market. Yahoo had been discussing a complex deal with Alibaba that would have avoided incurring a large tax deal, but those talks unraveled shortly after Thompson’s hiring.

Thompson had renewed the Alibaba discussions and, last month, expressed some hope that a deal would get done this year.

Signaling Loeb’s key role in the Alibaba talks, Yahoo appointed him to the board’s strategic planning and transactions committee.

Selling part of the Alibaba stake would be welcomed by Loeb and other major shareholders because it would probably produce a multibillion-dollar windfall. As of March 31, Yahoo estimated its holdings in Alibaba were worth $14 billion. That indicates investors see little remaining value in the rest of Yahoo, which currently has a market value of $19 billion.

Saverin Dumps US Citizenship Ahead of Facebook IPO

Facebook co-founder Eduardo Saverin has renounced his U.S. citizenship, a move expected to save him hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes stemming from the company’s impending initial public offering.

The Brazil-born 30-year-old became a U.S. citizen in 1998 but has lived in Singapore since 2009. Giving up his citizenship will allow him to avoid paying taxes on billions of dollars of capital gains when Facebook launches its IPO Friday. Singapore does not have a capital gains tax.

Saverin gave up his citizenship in the first quarter of this year, the U.S. Internal Revenue Service said.

"Eduardo recently found it to be more practical to become a resident of Singapore since he plans to live there for an indefinite period of time," Saverin’s New York-based spokesman Tom Goodman said Tuesday in a statement.

Goodman said that because Saverin plans to invest in Brazilian and global companies that have strong interests in entering Asian markets, "it made the most sense for him to use Singapore as a home base."

Saverin has a 4 percent stake in Facebook, which has headquarters in Menlo Park, California. Analysts say the company could be worth $100 billion.

Saverin, who moved to the U.S. from Brazil in 1992, founded Facebook with Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 while the two were students at Harvard University. Saverin gained additional fame when his conflict with Zuckerberg and departure from the company was depicted in the 2010 movie "The Social Network."

Pirate Bay Censorship Judge Is Corrupt, Claims Pirate Party Founder

This week yet another court order was handed down in Europe with the aim of censoring The Pirate Bay. The ruling forbids the Dutch Pirate Party from not only running a direct proxy, but also telling people how to circumvent an earlier court ordered blockade. However, according to Pirate Party founder Rick Falkvinge, the judge in the case has a history of corruption relating to another file-sharing case he presided over in the Netherlands.

The Court of The Hague in the Netherlands has been particularly busy this work with Pirate Bay-related cases.

Following an earlier court ruling ordering two of the country s largest ISPs to block subscriber access to The Pirate Bay, the Court ordered a further five ISPs to block TPB IP addresses and 20 domain names Thursday. The Court then went on to make a decision that was perhaps even more controversial than the first.

The Dutch Pirate Party had been running a proxy service to facilitate access to the now-blocked Pirate Bay, but following pressure from anti-piracy group BREIN their activities were outlawed this week by the Court. The Pirate Party was ordered to shutdown its reverse proxy indefinitely and block Pirate Bay domains and IP-addresses from its generic proxy.

However, in a decision that raised eyebrows, Judge Chris Hensen also banned the Party from using their own website to list the locations of other websites that allow the public to circumvent the blockade.

This decision by Henson which some observers believe amounts to a curtailment of freedom of speech is not the first the Judge has made of this nature. In 2010, movie studio Eyeworks won its lawsuit against Dutch Usenet community FTD. In that verdict, Judge Hensen ruled that by allowing users to talk about a copyrighted movie s location on Usenet, FTD was effectively publishing the movie as if they had actually hosted it on their own servers.

After the ruling it transpired that Judge Henson and Dirk Visser, the lawyer for the movie studio, had a closer relationship than had been expected. Visser, who also represented BREIN in their victory over Mininova, had been running courses for copyright specialists where Judge Hensen was once one of the teachers.

Of course, now Judge Hensen has delivered a similar ruling, his connections with Visser are being re-examined, not least by Pirate Party founder Rick Falkvinge who is absolutely scathing.

> This is truly mind-boggling: not only was the plaintiff and judge personally and closely acquainted, the plaintiff in a controversial copyright monopoly case was running a commercial anti-piracy outfit together with the judge in the case, Falkvinge writes.

> Money was involved. Commercial interest was involved. The judge was, as it appears from this brochure for the quite expensive course, getting money. From the plaintiff. Shortly after the case. In a directly related matter. That makes the judge not only corrupt, but textbook corrupt, Falkvinge adds.

Claims of bias have hounded many big copyright-related cases in recent years, but for whatever reason have never gained any traction. In 2009 following the conviction of the founders of The Pirate Bay, it was revealed that two of the four judges set to hear their appeal were members of pro-copyright groups. The Supreme Court eventually decided that this would not affect their judgment.

The year before it was revealed that police officer Jim Keyzer, the leader and key witness in the initial Pirate Bay investigation, had been recently employed by Warner Bros, one of the plaintiffs in the case. The controversy deepened when it was discovered that his employment with the studio was only temporary he later returned to the police to head up an IT Crime unit.

This so-called revolving door phenomenon has raised its head time and again in the past couple of years. In March 2011, U.S. District Court Judge Beryl Howell a former RIAA lobbyist and anti-piracy company boss delivered a helpful ruling for potential copyright trolls.

Then later that month it was revealed that a former music industry lobbyist had been appointed head of a unit dealing with copyright and enforcement issues at the European Commission.

During early May commenting on the case against Megaupload, law Professor Eric Goldman bemoaned the revolving door between government and the content industry.

Microsoft Funded Startup Aims to Kill BitTorrent Traffic

The Russian based Pirate Pay startup is promising the entertainment industry a pirate-free future. With help from Microsoft, the developers have built a system that claims to track and shut down the distribution of copyrighted works on BitTorrent. Their first project successfully stopped tens of thousands of downloads.

pirate payHollywood, software giants and the major music labels see BitTorrent as one of the largest threats to their business.

Billions in revenue are lost each year, they claim. But not for long if the Russian based startup Pirate Pay has its way. The company has developed a technology which allows them to attack existing BitTorrent swarms, making it impossible for people to share files.

The idea started three years ago when the developers were building a traffic management solution for Internet providers. The technology worked well. It was able to stop BitTorrent traffic if needed, which made the developers realize that they might have built the holy anti-piracy grail.

 After creating the prototype, we realized we could more generally prevent files from being downloaded, which meant that the program had great promise in combating the spread of pirated content, Pirate Pay CEO Andrei Klimenko says.

With this new business model in mind the company continued to develop their product, and it didn t take long before an investor was willing to support it. Last year Pirate Pay received a $100,000 investment from the Microsoft Seed Financing Fund.

Microsoft Russia s president praised the innovative idea, which his company would also be able to use in the future.

With the cash injection the company continued working on their anti-piracy solution and December last Direktcya Kino was the first to hire Pirate Pay s services. For a month Pirate Pay s technology protected the film Vysotsky. Thanks to God, I m alive, (distributed by The Walt Disney Studios Sony Pictures Releasing company) with moderate success.

The company doesn t reveal how it works, but they appear to be flooding clients with fake information, masquerading as legitimate peers.

 We used a number of servers to make a connection to each and every P2P client that distributed this film. Then Pirate Pay sent specific traffic to confuse these clients about the real IP-addresses of other clients and to make them disconnect from each other, Andrei Klimenko says.

The end result was that 44,845 transfers were successfully stopped. How many downloads slipped through, and whether the downloaders didn t simply try again later is unknown. Pirate Pay don t disclose their exact rates but say they charge between $12,000 and $50,000 depending on the scope of the project.

While Pirate Pay claim their technology is truly unique, it is not the first company to tackle BitTorrent piracy. The now defunct MediaDefender charged hundreds of thousands of dollars to attack BitTorrent trackers and upload fake torrent files.

MediaDefender was rebranded to Peer Media, and under this brand they continue to offer these and other anti-piracy services.

Whether Pirate Pay is truly different and more effective than any of the other solutions remains to be seen. Even if it s hugely effective, the scattered nature of BitTorrent makes it practically impossible to stop all infringing downloads of a movie, while the costs may outweigh the losses that are prevented.

Companies that really want to make Pirates Pay are probably better off investing in improvements to their legal offers.

2 Teens Arrested in Norway in Cyber Attack Case

Norwegian police say they have arrested two teenage hackers accused of so-called denial-of-service attacks against websites in Norway, the U.S. and other countries.

Police did not name the suspects but said they were aged 18 and 19.

Police attorney Erik Moestue told The Associated Press on Wednesday that the attacks targeted the websites of Norwegian bank DNB and the Norwegian Police Security Service as well as betting and news sites in Norway.

He declined to name the websites outside of Norway that were targeted, saying the investigation was ongoing.

Denial-of-service attacks jam websites with bogus traffic, effectively

making them unreachable. Such attacks are easy to launch and generally do little lasting damage.

HP Poised To Eliminate Up To 30,000 Jobs

Hewlett-Packard is poised to eliminate as many as 30,000 jobs to compensate for dwindling demand for personal computers as more people connect to the Internet on smartphones and tablets, according to reports published Thursday.

The looming cuts cited by Bloomberg News and the technology blog All Things D would trim as much as 9 percent of HP's workforce, based on the 349,600 people employed by the Palo Alto, Calif., company as of last October. A breakdown on HP's website listed 324,600 employees, but company spokesman Michael Thacker said the information was wrong. He pointed to the October figure listed in HP's annual report as the most accurate head count.

Bloomberg News says HP is mulling 25,000 job cuts. All Things D, which is affiliated with The Wall Street Journal, estimates the purge will jettison 30,000 jobs. Both reports cited unnamed people familiar with HP's plans.

Thacker declined to comment on the reports.

The job cuts could be announced next Wednesday, when HP is scheduled to report its quarterly earnings.

Those results are expected to show that HP, the world's largest maker of PCs and printers, is still struggling to adapt to a technological shift that is enabling more computing tasks to be completed on smartphones and tablet computers such as Apple Inc.'s hot-selling iPad.

The trend has been crimping HP's sales. Analysts predict HP's revenue for its current fiscal year ending in October will total $122 billion, down 4 percent from $127 billion last year.

If HP trims its payroll by at least 18,000 workers, the company could save more than $1 billion annually, according to ISI Group analyst Brian Marshall.

If it occurs, the purge would be the most dramatic step taken so far by HP CEO Meg Whitman, who took the job last September after the company abruptly ended the 11-month reign of her predecessor, Leo Apotheker.

Whitman told analysts that she inherited such a messy situation that it may take several years for the company to bounce back. HP is trying to lift its stock price back to where it was nearly two years ago before the company demanded the resignation of another CEO, Mark Hurd, who was widely respected on Wall Street. Hurd stepped down in August 2010 amid questions about his relationship with an HP marketing contractor.

HP's shares are worth half as much as they were before Hurd's departure. The stock gained 3 cents Thursday to close at $22.03.

Whitman has said she wants to increase spending on research and development to spur more innovation at HP. The company cut deeply into its

research-and-development budget while Hurd was CEO. Whitman has indicated that she would reduce expenses in other areas so she can funnel more money into research and development.

Companies Ask: Does Advertising on Facebook Pay?

Responding to extraordinary demand, Facebook said Wednesday that it would sell more stock in the company's initial public offering. But ahead of the IPO, a debate emerged between two of the nation's largest automakers: Does it pay to advertise on the social network?

General Motors, the nation's largest automaker, said it would abandon Facebook ads after concluding they were ineffective. At the same time, Ford reaffirmed its commitment to Facebook, saying their relationship was stronger than ever.

The direct financial impact of GM's move is minimal for Facebook, but the decision drew attention to the network's advertising system, which some observers regard as immature.

In a regulatory filing Wednesday, Facebook said it would add 84 million shares, worth up to $3.2 billion, to the IPO, which is shaping up to be the decade's hottest. The company's stock is expected to begin trading Friday on the Nasdaq Stock Market under the ticker symbol "FB".

Almost half of the additional shares come from investment firms DST Global and Tiger Global. Goldman Sachs is doubling the number of shares it is selling. Facebook board members Peter Thiel and James Breyer are also selling more shares.

Since all of the additional shares come from insiders and early investors, the company won't benefit from their sale.

"It certainly does raise the question: How much higher could the stock go if institutions who know the company well think this is a good price to sell?" said Daniel Ernst, an analyst with Hudson Square Research.

On the other hand, he said, investment firms only make money by selling their stakes, and they have bills to pay. So the fact that they are selling more is only a limited indication of their confidence in the company.

The news comes a day after Facebook raised the expected price of the stock to a range of $34 to $38 per share, up from its previous range of $28 to $35.

At the high end of the price range, the IPO would raise $16 billion, without the overallotment option reserved to meet extra demand. That would make it the third-largest IPO in American history, ahead of General Motors in 2010, according to Renaissance Capital.

The IPO would value Facebook at more than $100 billion. The stock is expected to get a final price Thursday evening.

In papers filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, Facebook said current shareholders are now offering approximately 241 million shares, up from about 157 million shares previously.

Even though founder Mark Zuckerberg is not increasing the number of shares he is selling, the additional sales will trim his voting control to 55.8 percent from 57.3 percent. That's because he has voting control over some of the shares owned by investment firms.

The market expects a substantial IPO "pop," or first-day price jump, said Josef Schuster, founder of IPO investment and tracking firm IPOX Schuster. But the overall stock market has been down in the last two weeks, and investor interest could flag quickly, he said.

"It may be rough waters for Facebook in the next few days, given that pricing has been up and up in a market that's been down and down," he said.

Facebook has more than 900 million users who log in at least once a month, but it makes only a few dollars per year from each one, chiefly through advertising. Advertisers have been complaining that it's difficult to make good use of Facebook.

A person briefed on GM's advertising said the company will stop running paid advertising on Facebook by mid-summer because advertising agencies and third-party companies that reviewed the ads determined the company wasn't getting much back for its $10 million annual investment.

The person, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because GM's ad strategy is private, said the Facebook ads did not entice consumers to consider GM products.

GM will, however, maintain Facebook pages for all of its brands and models. Those pages are popular and do attract customers to products, the person said. But they don't make money for Facebook.

GM spends about $30 million a year creating content such as pictures and videos to post on the pages, the person said.

More than 3.1 million people on Facebook "like" two pages dedicated to the Camaro muscle car, and 1.2 million "like" the Chevrolet brand. GM also has brand pages for individual countries.

GM said that it constantly reviews whether its advertising in all media reaches the right age and income demographics. It could reconsider Facebook ads later in the year, the person said.

GM's advertising spending is a tiny fraction of Facebook's total 2011 advertising revenue of $3.15 billion. But the automaker's decision could be symptomatic of Facebook's weak appeal to advertisers.

The social network's chief moneymakers are so-called "display ads" boxes that show up on the right side of Facebook's page. They're tuned to users' interests and activities, but they don't connect as well as Google Inc.'s search-based ads.

The problem may not be just Facebook's. The advertising world is set up to take advantage of one-way media like magazines and TV, not two-way channels like Facebook, and may need some time to adjust.

Ford Motor Co. is taking the opposite tack of GM. It's set to increase spending on Facebook advertising this year, said Scott Monty, Ford's global head of social media. Ford sees the site as a way to build

long-term relationships with customers, not just as an online billboard.

Ford complements display ads by sponsoring stories in the news feeds of people who subscribe to its pages. People see them in the area where their attention is focused, rather than in the right-hand column, Monty said.

It also buys ads that appear when a person logs out of Facebook, with images and descriptions of products such as the Ford Mustang, he said. He wouldn’t say how much the carmaker spends with Facebook.

The value of Facebook ads, Monty said, can’t be measured simply by the number of clicks they get from viewers.

"It’s a holistic kind of a relationship thing rather than a single transaction we’re looking for," he said.

Governor Mistakenly Says Facebook Invented in California

Apparently, California Gov. Jerry Brown forgot to rent "The Social Network."

In an appearance Friday on "CBS This Morning," the California governor said his state is still the land of innovation and where Facebook was invented.

He added: "Not in Texas, not in Arizona, not in Manhattan and certainly not, you know, under the White House or the Congress."

But interviewer Charlie Rose pointed out that CEO Mark Zuckerberg and others developed the precursor to the iconic social network at Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass.

Brown responded that the Facebook’s inventors quickly came to California, "where all the other innovative people are."

The Menlo Park, Calif.-based company began selling stock Friday. Brown and other officials hope it could bring in as much as $2.1 billion in tax revenue for California.

Poll: Half of Americans Call Facebook A Fad

Half of Americans think Facebook is a passing fad, according to the results of a new Associated Press-CNBC poll. And, in the run-up to the social network’s initial public offering of stock, half of Americans also say the social network’s expected asking price is too high.

The company Mark Zuckerberg created as a Harvard student eight years ago is preparing for what looks to be the biggest Internet IPO ever. Expected later this week, Facebook’s Wall Street debut could value the company at $100 billion, making it worth more than Disney, Ford and Kraft Foods.

That’s testament to the impressive numbers Facebook has posted in its relatively brief history. More than 40 percent of American adults log in

to the site to share news, personal observations, photos and more at least once a week. In all, some 900 million people around the world are users. Facebook's revenue grew from $777 million in 2009 to $3.7 billion last year. And in the first quarter of 2012 it was more than $1 billion.

Just a third of those surveyed think the company's expected value is appropriate, while 50 percent say it is too high. Those who invest in the stock market are more likely to see shares as overvalued, 58 percent said so. About 3 in 10 investors say the expected value of shares is fair. Facebook on Tuesday lifted the expected price for its shares to $34 to $38 apiece from $28 to $35 each.

But price worries won't necessarily stop would-be investors. Half the people surveyed say they think Facebook is a good bet, while 31 percent do not. The rest aren't sure. Americans who invest in stocks roughly agree, although investors who are more "active" those who have changed their holdings in the past month are more negative. Nearly 40 percent say Facebook would not be a good investment.

Young adults, a majority of whom log on to Facebook daily, are more willing to dance to their hoodie-wearing piper, 28-year-old CEO Mark Zuckerberg. Among Zuckerberg's peers, adults under age 35, 59 percent say Facebook is a good bet. Compare that to the views of senior citizens: Only 39 percent age 65 and over say Facebook shares are a good investment. Nearly half of Gen X'ers (ages 35-44) say the company is a good bet, as do 55 percent of middle-aged people.

Those under 35 are the generation most interested in Facebook's IPO because they've grown up immersed in the social network. They were the first users, logging in from their college dorm rooms. Later, Facebook expanded to allow high school-age and even younger students to sign up. It's become an integral part of their lives, giving them a launching pad to spread the news of life's major developments through posts and pictures.

Conversely, it's the rare senior citizen on Facebook: Just 21 percent have an account. Half of baby boomers the generation born in the years after World War II have one. But most of the 56 percent of the country that's on Facebook is young two-thirds of Gen X'ers and a staggering 81 percent of people 18-35 use the social networking site.

Young people aren't just connected. They are constantly tethered to smartphones, tablets and notebook computers. Even with the rise of alternative social networks like Twitter and Google Plus, 55 percent of Zuckerberg's peers go on Facebook every day. A third log on several times a day. Despite the intensity of their use, a narrow majority of young adults predict Facebook's appeal will fade down the road (51 percent), fewer think it will stick around as a service (44 percent).

The public overall is similarly divided on the company's future. Just under half of adults (46 percent) predict a short timeline for Facebook, while 43 percent say it has staying power.

Young people are more aware of Zuckerberg and have more positive views of the CEO, who celebrated his 28th birthday on Monday. Overall, one in five Americans say they've never heard of him, 30 percent don't have an opinion and 14 percent plain don't like him. Only about a third have a good impression of the CEO, who has alienated some with Facebook's ever-changing approach to user privacy.

But 46 percent of people under 35 like him. And a scant 4 percent of those younger adults say they've never heard of him.

The privacy issue is a stinger. Three of every five Facebook users say they have little or no faith that the company will protect their personal information. Only 13 percent trust Facebook to guard their data, and only 12 percent would feel safe making purchases through the site. Even Facebook's most dedicated users are wary half of those who use the site daily say they wouldn't feel safe buying things on the network.

As for how Facebook makes most of its money selling ads 57 percent of users say they never click on them or on Facebook's sponsored content. About another quarter say they rarely do.

Despite user discontent about privacy, Facebook and Zuckerberg have connected with many Americans. The survey suggests that his reputation and youth seem more like assets than liabilities. For those who have heard of the CEO, two-thirds are at least somewhat confident in his ability to run a large public company. Twenty-two percent doubt he can handle the leadership role. As for the social network he created, 51 percent of Americans clicked "Like."

The Associated Press-CNBC Poll was conducted May 3-7, 2012 by GfK Roper Public Affairs and Corporate Communications. It involved landline and cell phone interviews with 1,004 adults nationwide and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.9 percentage points.

New Search Engine Launches This Month Designed For Older Internet Users

A brand new search engine with a unique take on targeted search results has launched specifically for the older internet user. Designed with 50+ surfers in mind, AskMabel.co.uk is tailored to the search preferences of a mature audience.

Developed by the team behind online portal Mabels.org.uk, AskMabel uses an intuitive search agent to fine tune displayed results to more closely match topics and ages relevant to older internet fans. This level of demographic profiling helps to create a seamless user experience, providing a quicker and easier route to finding relevant information online.

Jon Wickham, Owner and founder of Mabels said, Over 50s are rapidly becoming prolific internet users with traditional desktop and mobile phone access on the increase. It's very important that information about issues affecting the older generation are easily and broadly accessible. There are so many fantastic web sites and information out there but we found that finding them quickly without wasting valuable time having to search all over the place wasn t as easy as you d think. AskMabel has been designed in conjunction with Mabels.org.uk and uses all of our expertise gathered from years of working with internet users over 50 to help them find suitable answers to their search queries as quickly as possible.

Ask Mabel combines the innovative ability to match and fine tune the results of searches directly to the topic and age of the older internet user with an intuitive, super-clean interface. An information-rich design adds to the user experience, keeping search screens and results pages on topic for clearer, more concise searching, including large font and useful

buttons like clear search term .

When entering a search term in to the search box, the user can choose to Ask Mabel to find internet pages related to specific categories such as health, finance, retirement, mobility or homecare or can opt for a Google-powered search. The results page shows the pre-selected web pages determined to be most applicable to the older user.

Latest topical news relevant to the age group is sourced manually and automatically, with headlines shown on the left of all results for convenience. News items are also sourced from the Mabels.org.uk portal, making them highly relevant to the over 50s.

The launch of AskMabel has been driven in part by the meteoric rise in so called silver surfers in the UK over the last 24 months. Research by Nielsen suggests that more than 12 million people over 50 use the Internet regularly. Their studies found that the older generation have embraced the internet, using it to carry out everyday tasks such as shopping or booking a holiday. Driven by this proliferation, niche websites have sprung up from providers such as Saga, women s clothing retailers and a number of cruise lines, targeting the older, tech-savvy internet user. AskMabel helps users to correlate all of this data and access only the most relevant of web pages, making it easy to navigate the internet and find information of interest.

Jon Wickham added, Filtering the users search results to the topic of the search as well as the age group of the user is the first steps to a much improved internet browsing experience and believes is the way forward in attracting the quality and value content we all strive for.

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